

English 200: Introduction to Literature

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Section 702: on-line web course

Course description:

This course will introduce you to the idea of literature as a distinct and particular kind of writing worthy of your attention and study. Our readings have been chosen to expose you to a variety of literary kinds and styles; they function as specific examples so that we may determine what qualities and features allow us to categorize them as literature. We will also attempt to establish the boundaries of literature: at what point does literature reach its limits, beyond which we experience other modes of writing and other human activities? Finally, we will seek to understand the value of literature: what is its unique contribution to human life and why does it matter? The texts for this class will challenge you to think about what you read in a formal and structured way; you will also confront their claims of truth, their views on the meaning of life and death, the importance of love, the reality of evil, and the foundational requirement of a culture of literature: the necessary freedom to read and write without censorship.

Books

I require these specific editions, so please order your book by the ISBN number provided; these texts are readily available at the WKU book store, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, etc. It is your responsibility to get these texts, not mine or the bookstore's.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

ISBN 9781451673319

Edson, Margaret. *Wit: A Play*. Farrar Straus & Giroux. 1999.

ISBN 9780571198771

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories*. Dover Thrift Edition. Mineola NY: Dover, 1992.

ISBN 9780486270609

Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*. Cambridge School Shakespeare. 2nd edition. 2005.

ISBN 9780521618779

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. A new translation by Marion Wiesel. Hill and Wang. 2006.

ISBN 9780374500016

Films

(You will be expected to see these films on your own at the appropriate time on the schedule. You will need to have access to the VPAL library, Netflix, Amazon Prime, iTunes, and/or other video rental services)

Il Postino. Directed by Michael Radford. 1994.
Twelfth Night. Directed by Trevor Nunn. 1996.
Wit. Directed by Mike Nichols. 2001.

IMPORTANT! Warning about Online Courses:

Students who do not understand the particular challenges of online courses often struggle and drop out. You must be self-motivated, disciplined, and good at time management to succeed in an online class. You must also have reliable access to a computer with high-speed internet on a daily basis. To evaluate whether you are a good match for online learning, check out the following:

1. Is distance learning for me?:

<https://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/for-me.php>

2. WKU's Orientation for Online Learners:

<https://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/>

Blackboard:

If you have not used Blackboard much, or if this is your first online class, you are strongly urged to complete Blackboard's Student User Training. These online modules will improve or refresh your skills. To sign up, log in to Blackboard. Click "IT Training" on the red banner (top right corner), then look for IT: Blackboard Student User Training. You will gain instant access upon signing up.

Assignments and written Work

This is a reading course, and it is extremely important for you to keep up with your reading of these texts. This will require daily reading. I expect you to purchase the required texts and to use them in all your work! A study guide is no substitute for the text itself. As is traditional in literature courses, you should be prepared to demonstrate your comprehension of these texts by talking about them on discussion boards and writing about them in formal essays. You will write four short commentaries on our readings at the beginning of the semester followed by two longer papers of four to six pages with at least one secondary source (books and articles; not internet) and appropriate documentation. Remember to observe the rules for writing listed in the Supplement to this syllabus. The commentaries and papers should demonstrate your competence in writing analytic and interpretive essays according to traditional standards of style, citation, and documentation.

Discussion Board Posts and Responses

You will complete discussion board posts in response to specific questions about the reading(s). Each post requires two parts: an initial post, and a substantive response to

others' posts. Posts should be approximately 200 words. Responses may be of variable length. Follow these guidelines for all online posts and responses:

1. Be sure your posts are relevant, thoughtful, and to the point; don't stray off-topic.
2. Use care in writing all posts and proofread them to avoid typos and errors. (You might find it helpful to type your response in a word processing program, and then cut and paste).
3. Read other posts before writing your own, and build on what has already been said.
4. Check that when you "agree" or "disagree" with others, you don't stop there – you must also add something new to the conversation. Simply repeating others' points will earn you a zero.
5. Demonstrate your close engagement with the texts under discussion by citing evidence to support your claims. (A good rule of thumb: every post should include at least 1 quotation).
6. Avoid speaking subjectively, or relying on personal experience or anecdotes.
7. Be concrete and specific; avoid unfounded assertions and broad generalizations.
8. Give your posts informative or creative titles (i.e. not "Post #4").
9. Be respectful of others' contributions. One of the primary goals of college is to foster the open exchange of ideas, even (or especially) about controversial topics. That means you are free to disagree with other students and with me – just be sure to do so respectfully.

Paper Requirements: Commentaries

Commentaries should be typewritten, double-spaced, one-inch margins, Times New Roman 11 font, three paragraphs, with a title and a Work Cited/Reference given in full, all on a single page. The first and third paragraphs should have exactly three sentences; the middle paragraph at least four. I will not accept more than one page of text, but a good paper will develop the middle paragraph as fully as the page allows. Each commentary should quote from the text one time, using MLA documentation. The quotation should be embedded in the middle paragraph; i.e., not in the first or last sentence, and should be introduced by your own words, not free standing in its own sentence. Be sure to follow your quotation with an explanation, analysis, interpretation, disagreement, or other form of commentary on that specific quotation.

Commentaries should be short, formal essays in which you discuss and explore an important aspect, idea, or theme in the work. They should be focused on the text itself, not background material or historical context: what are the main ideas and viewpoints expressed in the text? What is a key quotation?

Avoid self-referential comments, references to "the reader," evaluative comments about a text's "effectiveness," the use of "seems" and "appears," and mere summarizing. I do not want to see phrases like "throughout the work," or introductions to quotations that begin with "It has been said" or "So-and-so says it best." Don't use the words "truly" as an intensifier or "utilize" when "use" will do. Don't give agency to "society" as in these phrases: "Society tells her" and "Society made him believe." Never refer to anyone's "comfort zone."

Paper Requirements: Term Papers

Your two term papers should be 3-4 pages long, and include at least one secondary source of literary criticism on your primary text. You should quote from both the primary and secondary text, cite your texts, and provide a complete "Works Cited" according to the standard format of MLA.

Final exam:

The final exam will consist of a combination of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank), passage identifications, and short answers. The final exam will be cumulative, and will be completed online in a proctored setting at the course's conclusion. You will need to register for the exam in advance.

Grades

You will receive points as follows:

1. Introductory writing exercise: 10 points
2. discussion board entries: 10 points x 12 = 120
3. informal writing assignments: 10 points x 3 = 30
4. formal commentaries: 30 points x 5 = 150
5. term papers: 100 points x 2 = 200
6. final exam: 100 points

Total points will then be graded on a standard percentage basis: 90% is an A, etc.

Important Dates

Monday, Jan 26: Classes begin

Monday, Feb 2: Last day to add a class or drop a class without a grade

Mar 9-13: Spring Break. No class.

Friday, Mar 20: Last day to withdraw from a class

Monday, Apr 6: FN date (60% point of the semester). (Note: Students who stop attending class before this date, are assigned a final grade of FN, not F. The grade of FN, according to the undergraduate catalog, indicates "Failure due to non-attendance (no semester hours earned and no quality points)." This grade could have implications for financial assistance.

Writing Center Assistance

The Writing Center is located in Cherry Hall 123. Our writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can help you brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper for you. See instructions of the website www.wku.edu/writingcenter <<http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter>> for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during our operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a student knowingly or unknowingly submits another person's published or unpublished (print or web) writing as his/her own, has another person dictate what should be written, or has another person write an assignment and submits that work as his/her own. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty on any single assignment, including short papers, reflective assignments, and drafts, will result in a course penalty up to course failure. Length or nature of the assignment will not be factors in course penalty. In other words, plagiarism in a one-page paper might result in course failure just like plagiarism in a six page paper might.

Supplement for English 200: Rules for Writing

Basic rules for using sources in your writing:

Acknowledge your use of direct quotations with quotation marks.

Never begin a sentence with a quotation.

Begin with your own words leading into and announcing the quotation.

Generally you should mention the author and text as you lead into the quotation.

Make sure your sentence and the quotation form one grammatically correct sentence.

Follow the quotation with your commentary: explain, interpret, analyze!

Provide information about the precise location of your quotation so your reader can also find it (use in-text citations to give page number and author/text if not already provided in your lead-in).

Never begin a paragraph with a quotation; first establish what you intend to say in your opening sentence.

Don't end a paragraph with a quotation; end with your own conclusion.

In a paragraph use a source to support, defend, or clarify your ideas and to help you move from the first sentence to the last.

Long quotations should be block-indented.

Basic rules for organization in writing:

Always think in a three-part structure: introduction, body, conclusion.

The sentence is to a paragraph as the paragraph is to an essay: introductory sentence/paragraph, followed by the body of the paragraph/essay, followed by the concluding sentence/paragraph.

Use paragraphs to bring order to your sentences; there should be coherence within paragraphs and development between paragraphs.

An introduction should tell what the writing is about, provide some background/context, and state the purpose of the writing.

The body of the writing should develop the ideas in the introduction; explain, demonstrate, argue, persuade, analyze, clarify, refute, justify!

The conclusion should provide a sense of accomplishment and appropriate closure.

Check-list for papers:

I. Title

A. Do you reveal the core content of your paper?

B. Have you made it interesting?

II. Introduction

A. Do you clearly present the major subject of your paper, including the author and the text that you will be writing on?

B. Do you explain why this subject is interesting, important, worthy of discussion, etc.?

C. Do you provide a strong and clear thesis: that is, the claim or assertion that you are making about the subject?

III. Development

A. Do you provide any necessary background information to orient your reader?

B. Do you use separate paragraphs for different parts of your paper?

C. If you have made any references to the text, or have quoted from it or any other source, have you properly cited and documented them?

IV. Conclusion

A. Have you made sure not to introduce any new ideas in your conclusion?

B. Do you review and summarize the significance of your views on the subject?

Course Outline

Week 1: January 26 to February 1, 2015

Topics: Introduction to the course and to writing

Watch/Listen to professor's introductory video

Read Course Syllabus and "A Typology of Problem Sentences"

Complete exercise from "A Typology of Problem Sentences" (10 points)

Due: 2/1 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box

Week 2: February 2 – February 8, 2015

Topics: First introductions to literature

Read "How to Rewrite a Sentence" and compare those revised sentences with yours.

Watch/Listen to professor's video on writing good sentences.

Introduction #1: From a list to poetry

Read selection from Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

Complete Discussion #1: discuss what makes Humbert's list of names poetry? Why? One post and one reply to another person's post. (10 points)

Due: 2/8 @ 11:59 pm CST on discussion board forum.

Complete Informal writing assignment #1: after reading the short selection from Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, compare this list of names with the one Humbert turns into a poem. Can you construct a "poem" out of our class names? What problems do you encounter? What motivation might you lack that the narrator of *Lolita* has?

Introduction #2: A Child's Introduction to Literature

Read Margaret Wise Brown's two classic children's books, *Goodnight Moon* and *The Runaway Bunny*. You can do this on-line (just google the titles and explore what comes up) or go to Barnes & Noble and look for the books.

Complete Discussion #2: How are these two books different? What kind of literature would you call *Goodnight Moon*? What aspects of language attract your attention? Would you call *The Runaway Bunny* a different kind of literature than *Goodnight Moon*? Does it have a "larger" meaning? What is it "really" about? One post and two replies to other posts. (10 points)

Due: 2/8 @ 11:59 pm CST on discussion board forum.

Complete Informal writing assignment #2: write up your own analysis and interpretation of these children's books. This should be at least one page in length. (10 points)

Due: 2/8 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box.

Week 3: February 9 – February 15, 2015

Topic # 1: Literary dictation

Watch/Listen to professor's video recitation

Complete Informal writing assignment #3 based on dictation

This assignment has four necessary steps:

- a. After listening to my video recitation, write it down in a single paragraph. Please do not look this up online as that will spoil the purpose of this assignment.
- b. Re-write that paragraph, dividing it up into separate paragraphs. Briefly explain your reasons for dividing it.

c. Write the words out to make it look like a poem, that is, in a free verse form, *not* based on anything else other than your free choice about how to divide it. For this exercise you should not try to follow any pattern or formal features other than phrases and sentences. Again, briefly explain your reasons.

d. Finally, figure out any pattern or formal features of stress, rhythm, accent, repetition, or rhyme in the words that help determine where the breaks in each line *should* occur. Re-write the words again, following those observations. Again, explain your decision. You should end up with four different versions of these words.

(10 points)

Due: 2/15 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box.

Topic # 2: Free verse

Read Pablo Neruda's "Ode to a Beautiful Nude" in the two different translations provided.

Complete Discussion #3: Which translation do you prefer? Why? One post and one reply to another person's post. (10 points)

Due: 2/15 @ 11:59 pm CST on discussion board forum.

Week 4: February 16 – February 22, 2015

Topic: What is poetry?

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video: what is poetry? Intensity of language's sound and meaning. Linguistic level: the word.

Read Poems for Memorizing. You will be required to memorize one of these poems and write it from memory at the final exam.

Watch *Il Postino*. Keep notes on what it says about poetry.

Complete Paper/Commentary #1 (30 points): following the commentary guidelines in the syllabus, write about the way that poetry uses figurative language such as metaphors, similes, and other images. Refer to and quote from both the film, *Il Postino*, and Neruda's "Ode to a Beautiful Nude." What does Mario learn about language and poetry, especially when he responds a second time to the request to "describe the beauties of the island"?

Due: 2/21 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box

Week 5: February 22 – March 1, 2015

Topic: What is story?

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video: what is story? intensification of normal life: people performing actions in space and through time. Linguistic level: the sentence.

Read and watch *Wit*, and tie it in to Donne's sonnet and the *Runaway Bunny*. Read carefully for detail: where in the play is the clearest statement of its main idea or theme?

Complete Discussion #4: discuss the ways that the play/film intensifies characters, actions, and setting so they are more meaningful. If the main opposition in the play is between wit and kindness, how do the characters line up? Who embodies both characteristics? Comment on the use of Donne's sonnet as well as *The Runaway Bunny*. One posting and two replies. Ten points.

Due: 3/1 @ 11:59 pm CST on discussion board forum

Complete Paper/Commentary #2 (30 points): Write either about how the characters in *Wit* represent different ways of being in the world or how *Wit* could be read as an allegory, such as is suggested by Professor Ashford in reading *The Runaway Bunny*.

Due: 3/1 @ 11:59 pm CST on assignment dropbox.

Week 6: March 2 – March 8, 2015

Topic: What is narrative?

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video: what is narrative? Story by telling.

Read "Young Goodman Brown" and "Major Molineux, My Kinsman."

Complete Discussion #5: discuss these two stories by Hawthorne. How does the narrator present himself? Why is he telling these stories? How does he intensify the elements of story? One posting and two replies. Ten points.

Due: 3/8 @ 11:59 pm CST on Discussion Board

Week 7: March 9 – March 15, 2015

Spring Break: No class, no assignments

Week 8: March 16 – March 22, 2015

Topics: censorship and freedom; **Theme;** *dolce et utile*

Read Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video: what is theme and literary value?

Complete Discussion #6: Discuss *Fahrenheit 451* as a fictional representation of human life and experience: *why* has it been imagined by Bradbury? What is the point? What moves the story? Good literature is *dolce et utile*: it is both sweet and useful; that is, it both pleases and teaches. Discuss how this story has both pleased and taught you.
Due: 3/22 @ 11:59 pm CST on Discussion Board. One posting and two replies. (Ten points.)

Complete Paper/Commentary #3 (30 points): With reference to Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, argue for the right in a free society to be offensive and even blasphemous in what is written and published.

Due: 3/22 @ 11:59 pm CST on assignment dropbox.

Week 9: March 23 – March 29, 2015

Topic: Literature and its boundaries

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video: what lies beyond literature?

Watch/Listen to a video of the ballet, *Swan Lake*. How is the story expressed?

Watch/Listen to a video of Janis Joplin singing "Maybe." Compare it to a printed text of the lyrics. What does the music bring to the words?

Complete Discussion #7: Discuss how these works go beyond literature and nevertheless share with it some similar features. One posting and two replies. Ten points.

Due: 3/29 @ 11:59 pm CST on Discussion Board.

Week 10: March 29 – April 5, 2015

Topic: Order and meaning in the Holocaust

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video

Read Eli Wiesel's *Night*

Complete Discussion #8: discuss Wiesel's use of literary elements in *Night*: recurring images, poetic language, plot development, characterization, symbolism of the setting, etc. One posting and two replies. (Ten points.)

Due: 4/5 @ 11:59 pm CST on Discussion Board.

Complete Term Paper #1 (100 points): Write a three-four page paper of literary analysis on *Night*, paying attention to recurring images, poetic language, plot development,

characterization, symbolism of the setting, etc. Remember to include another source. Why does Wiesel write his personal memoir in this literary way?

Due: 4/5 @ 11:59 pm CST on assignment drop box.

Week 11: April 6 – April 12, 2015

Topic: Return to the Sonnet

Read again the selected sonnets for memorization

Complete Discussion #9: discuss what poem you have chosen and why. One posting and two replies. (Ten points.)

Due: 4/12 @ 11:59 pm CST on Discussion Board.

Complete commentary/explication #4 of the poem you have chosen. (30 points.)

Due: 4/12 @ 11:59 pm CST on assignment drop box.

Week 12: April 13 – April 19, 2015

Topic: Literary love: Part One

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video.

Watch Trevor Nunn's film production of *Twelfth Night*

Read *Twelfth Night, Act One*

Complete Discussion #10: discuss the poetic language of the opening scene. How does it emphasize and intensify the wrong-headed loves of both Orsino and Olivia? One posting and one reply. (Ten points.)

Due: 4/19 @ 11:59 CST pm to discussion board.

Complete commentary/review #5 of the film of *Twelfth Night*. How does the film achieve things that couldn't be done on stage? (30 points)

Due: 4/19 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box.

Week 13: April 20 – April 26, 2015

Topic: Literary love: Part Two

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video.

Read *Twelfth Night, Acts Two and Three*

Complete Discussion #11: discuss the scene where Olivia proclaims her love to Viola/Cesario. What happens to the language? One posting and one reply. Ten points.
Due: 4/26 @ 11:59 CST pm to discussion board.

Week 14: April 27 – May 3, 2015

Topic: Literary love: Part Three

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video.

Read *Twelfth Night, Acts Four and Five*

Complete Discussion #12: discuss the conclusion of *Twelfth Night*. Is it satisfactory? Did the characters get what they deserved? One posting and one reply. (Ten points.)
Due: 5/3 @ 11:59 pm to assignment drop box

Week 15: May 4 – May 10, 2015

Topic: Retrospective/Review

Watch/Listen to professor's lecture video

Complete Term Paper #2 (100 points): Write a three-four page paper on *Twelfth Night*, focusing on the central scene in which Orsino and Viola compare men's and women's love. Analyze the significance of that scene and describe the changes that had to occur before Orsino and Viola could be joined in marriage. Remember to include a secondary source and to quote from both sources, with citation and proper documentation.
Due: 5/10 @ 11:59 pm CST to assignment drop box.

Final exam: proctored during finals week

Note

This syllabus and its requirements, texts, and procedures are subject to change if necessary or appropriate.

Colonnade Program Description

English 200 provides an introduction to a variety of literature at the college level. Assignments encourage critique and analysis and give students introductory knowledge of key literary terms, concepts, and reading strategies. Students apply this knowledge in

discussing and writing about literary texts and consider how literature inscribes the human experience. Because these classes emphasize the reading of primary texts, instructors will focus on literacy skills to supplement content course work.

Pre-2014 General Education Goals Met by this Course

English 200 fulfills the B.1 (Humanities/Literature) general education requirement. This course will help students attain these general education objectives: (1) proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking; and (2) an informed acquaintance with major achievements in the arts and humanities.

Colonnade (Fall 2014 and later) Learning Outcomes Met by this Course

English 200 helps to fulfill the Arts and Humanities (AH) Colonnade requirement. Upon completion of English 200, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
2. Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the Arts and Humanities.
4. Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.
6. Read, comprehend, and analyze primary texts independently and proficiently.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the goals above, students at the course's end should be able to

1. use basic literary terminology to analyze and interpret literary texts;
2. produce convincing and clearly-written argumentative essays; and
3. document primary and secondary sources using MLA style.

Program Assessment Notice

As part of a university-wide accreditation requirement, a sample of random student papers may be collected at the end of the semester and will be assessed by a departmental committee. Student names will remain anonymous and the assessment will in no way affect the student's grades.

ADA Notice

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room A200 Downing University Center. Their phone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD.

Please do not request accommodations from the instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services. Since this is a web course, you will need to mail the letter of accommodation to me or see me on campus to get it signed.